

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 288 375

FL 017 015

AUTHOR Wu, Rosalind
TITLE Children's Use of the Chinese Adverbial JIU.
PUB DATE Apr 87
NOTE 8p.; In: Papers and Reports on Child Language Development, Volume 26; see FL 017 001.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adverbs; *Child Language; Dialects; Discourse Analysis; Foreign Countries; *Language Usage; Linguistic Theory; *Mandarin Chinese; Manual Communication; *Semantics; *Speech Acts; Story Telling; Uncommonly Taught Languages; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Conditionals; Taiwan

ABSTRACT

A study examined young children's use of the Mandarin "jiu" in its adverbial form in conditional sentences. The language corpus included: (1) spontaneous speech samples of 66 children aged 4, 5, 6, and 7 years in 20 Taiwan locations and (2) story repetitions by 461 4-, 5-, and 6-year-olds in 22 locations. The data indicate that children as young as 4 years old probably comprehend several different meanings of "jiu," but primarily use the emphatic meaning in their spontaneous speech. In the repetition study, sentences with time adverbs are simpler and shorter than those with conditionals. If the children did not grasp the conditional sense of the sentences beyond the time sequence, there is no reason for them to be more likely to repeat "jiu" in the conditional sentences. Thus, the differences in repetition of jiu are an indication that the children can differentiate the conditional and temporal uses of the word. The results also suggest that more restricted experimental studies such as the repetition study can complement collection of spontaneous speech data to give a better understanding of children's language development. (MSE)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

Children's Use of the Chinese Adverbial JIU

Rosalind Wu

Taiwan Provincial Institute for Schoolteachers'
Inservice Education

Functions of jiu

The Mandarin character jiu (就) can function as a verb, an adverb, or an adverbial element with as many as 7-9 meanings. This report only deals with its adverbial functions. Incidentally, its use as a verb has not been found in the free speech samples we have collected from young Mandarin speaking children. As an adverb, jiu can denote either "immediately" or "only":

(1) Mama open jar cover, Little Star then fly out le.

媽媽打開蓋子 小星星就飛出去了

(2) He only likes to sleep.

他就喜歡睡覺

Jiu can be used as an emphatic particle. In this case it receives special stress and the optional copula verb that follows becomes destressed as in:

(3) The birthday person (emph) is you.

生日的人就是你呀

According to Li and Thompson (1981) jiu is the most common backward linking nonmovable adverb in Mandarin. Typically, it occurs immediately after the topic of the second clause in a two clause sentence. In this capacity it marks the change in state in the second clause with respect to the time mentioned in the first clause. This changed situation can simply be a result of the passage of time. When this is the case the adverbial element is optional, for clause sequence by itself can denote time sequence. For example:

(4) Little Wei thought for a bit, then asked Mama.

小威想了一想就問媽媽

At other times, jiu can also shift the preceding clause into the hypothetical mode, therefore it figures very prominently in many conditional sentences.

I am interested in the development of children's use of conditional sentences because it implies the cognitive ability to deal with the hypothetical as well as cause-effect relationships. With this in mind we have chosen a subset of conditional sentences, those marked by jiu, to explore linguistic development.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- * This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
□ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

E. Clark

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Distinguishing conditional sentences from non-conditionals

In English, conditionals are introduced by "if" or "unless" but in Mandarin the markers are entirely optional. A conditional clause may be introduced by forward linking adverbs such as *jiaru* (假如) or *dehua* (的話) or *ruguo* (如果), or there might be no linking element at all. When no linking element is present there may be no formal distinction between a "when" and an "if" statement. It is the context that determines the interpretation of the sentence. In particular the context involves the knowledge about the situation which the speaker and hearer share.

In the ensuing analysis, we rely heavily on context to determine if a sentence containing *jiu* is a conditional sentence. In addition, we apply the "if" test: all sentences that are meaningful with the addition of (*jiaru*) "if" in the beginning are classified as conditional sentences.

Data from Spontaneous Speech Samples

We taped children's conversations from 20 different locations all over Taiwan, representing 20 cities and counties of the ROC. In each location we taped 8 children in pairs---one pair of 4 year olds, one pair of 5 year olds, one pair of 6 year olds and one pair of 7 year olds. In each case, children were left alone in a room, often the counseling room in school but sometimes in a home. There may be toys, books or any other utensils or equipment normally in the room. The children's teacher would leave them instructions to play and talk so that she could record some conversations for a project and then retire to a distance or leave the room altogether, for approximately half an hour.

Of the 160 tapes collected, some were of unusable quality. Among the usable tapes many contained dialects other than Mandarin (chiefly Min, with some Hakka). All were transcribed but only the tapes that contained solely Mandarin are included in this report. As can be expected the purely Mandarin samples come from the older children. The data reported here are for 14 four year olds, 18 five year olds, 14 six year olds and 20 seven year olds.

The number of sentences containing *jiu* produced per child increased with age, as shown on Table 1.

The functions of the sentences were determined from context, but this was not altogether successful. As we can see on Table 1 many of the sentences were

TABLE 1

Occurrences of Jiu Sentences in Spontaneous Speech

Age	# sentence with jiu	% Emphatic	% Conditional	% Temporal	% Unclassifiable
4 N=14	5	60.0	0	20.0	20.0
5 N=18	70	35.7	12.9	31.4	20.0
6 N=14	87	20.7	23.0	43.7	12.6
7 N=20	105	27.6	30.5	27.6	14.3

TABLE 2

Sentences Containing Jiu Repeated by Children

Sentences Type	Length	Sentence
Emphatic	12	我想養的就是天上的小星星
	12	你告訴我什麼，我就忘記什麼
	8	生日的人就是你呀
	15	他就是想不出為什麼鼻子上要打結
Conditional	9	想看它就要把燈關了
	10	死掉以後就不會發亮了
	11	放出來牠就飛到天上去了
	15	如果要記事情就在手帕上打一個結
	10	這樣就一定不會忘記了
	8	小狗說：那就可以了
	17	你在鼻子上打一個結就可以提醒自己了
Temporal	10	小威想了一想就問媽媽
	11	蓋子一開星星就飛出來了
	9	小狗一想就想出來了

impossible to classify. There were two reasons for the difficulty. Sometimes the sentences and clauses preceding the character jiu were only partly audible. At other times, the children did not provide any context and their intention remained ambiguous.

The data on Table 1 show that at age 4 use of jiu was mainly confined to its emphatic sense. However, at 5 years the conditional use is quite well marked. Its use continues to increase up till 7 years.

Our frustration with identifying the context and hence the functions of jiu in spontaneous speech samples led us to examine a second data source, in which the context and use is clearly specified and the issue is whether children's attempt to imitate sentences using jiu can reveal something about their understanding of its use.

Data from Story Repetition

The second set of data derives from imitations of 183 sentences that made up two stories, which children repeated after a teacher, one sentence at a time. The entire procedure was taped, transcribed verbatim on to computer and then analyzed. Embedded in the 2 stories were 14 sentences containing jiu. There were 7 conditionals, 4 emphatics, 3 time adverbs. Table 2 lists the sentences and their functions.

The subjects were 461 children, 21 from each of 22 cities and counties across the ROC with 142 four year olds, 160 five year olds and 159 six year olds.

We examined first whether jiu was omitted from the 3 types of sentences in different proportions. The data are shown on Table 3. An Age x Sex x Sentence Type ANOVA was performed on the percent of responses containing jiu for each sentence type. Sentence type was a within subjects variable. The results indicate a main effect for sex ($F(1,455)=4.27$, $p<.05$), but no effect of age and sentence type ($F(2,455)=2.09$ and $F(2,910)=2.22$, respectively). The main effect of sex showed that girls generally performed better than boys.

There was a significant age by sentence type interaction ($F(4,910)=4.21$, $p<.01$). It showed that while emphatic and conditional sentences included more occurrences of jiu in the older children's repetitions, the repetition of jiu in temporal sentences decreased with increasing age.

These data do not match our hypothesis that conditionals are cognitively more complex and therefore tend to be omitted in the repetitions. They do however, make sense. One would expect the emphatic jiu to be

TABLE 3

Percent of Responses Containing Jiu

Age	Sex	N	Emphatic	Conditional	Temporal	Total
4	M	70	50.0	50.4	54.8	53.59
	F	72	53.5	55.4	57.4	
5	M	83	52.1	53.4	52.6	54.36
	F	77	55.2	61.8	51.5	
6	M	81	59.3	59.4	49.8	56.82
	F	78	62.2	57.3	53.0	
All		461	55.5	56.4	53.1	

TABLE 4

Semantic Accuracy Scale

- 0 : No response or repetition of one or two isolated characters
- 1 : Incorrect Meaning or omission of key element of sentence
- 2 : Minor deviation from original meaning
- 3 : Accurate reproduction of sentence meaning

least often omitted since the teacher would emphasize it in reading. Furthermore, it matches the early occurrence of the emphatic use of *jiu* among 4 year olds.

Perhaps even 4 year olds are able to comprehend the hypothetical nature of conditional sentences and recognize the important role of *jiu* in emphasizing the change in state in the second clause. In contrast, when *jiu* functions only as a time adverb, the clause sequence adequately reflects the sequence of events and *jiu* is more dispensable.

A more detailed analysis of the children's repetitions shows increasing accuracy in transmitting the meaning of the sentences. In most child language research, errors are more revealing than correct answers. We scored the elicited imitations for accuracy in meaning on the 4 point scale shown on Table 4. Scores of 1 and 2 indicate incomplete or inaccurate representations of the original meaning of the sentence. A score of 3 indicates a minor deviation of the meaning of the sentence while a 4 implies exact reproduction of the sentence's meaning. An Age x Sex x Sentence Type ANOVA was performed on the mean semantic accuracy scores of each subject for each sentence type. No sex differences were found ($F(1,422)=2.03, n.s.$) but significant main effects of age and sentence type were found ($F(2,422)=22.4, p<.0001$ and $F(2,844)=157.54, p<.0001$, respectively).

Table 5 shows the mean scores for the three types of *jiu* sentences for the 3 groups of subjects. It reveals that accuracy increases with age and that emphatic sentences produce the best performance, conditionals the next best and time adverbs the poorest.

There was also a significant age x sentence interaction effect ($F(4,844)=3.5, p<.01$). It shows that accuracy in depicting the meaning of emphatic sentences remained much the same between ages four and six, the accuracy with conditional sentences improved significantly during these years and accuracy with temporal sentences increased most.

Conclusion

The data indicate that children as young as four years probably comprehend several different meanings of *jiu* but mainly use the emphatic meaning in their spontaneous speech. In the repetition study, sentences with time adverbs are simpler and shorter than sentences with conditionals. If the children did not grasp the conditional sense of the sentences beyond the time sequence, there is no reason why they would be

TABLE 5

Mean Semantic Accuracy Scores of Responses

Sentence Type Age	Emphatic	Conditional	Temporal	All
4	2.43	2.13	2.42	2.33
5	2.50	2.22	2.62	2.45
6	2.66	2.45	2.82	2.64
All	2.53	2.27	2.63	

more likely to repeat jiu in the conditional sentences. Thus, the differences in repetition of jiu is an indication that the children can differentiate the conditional and temporal uses of jiu. The data also suggest more restricted experimental studies such as repetition studies can complement the collection of spontaneous speech data to give us a better understanding of children's language development.

References

Li, Charles N. and Sandra A Thompson (1981) Mandarin Chinese : a functional reference grammar. Berkeley: University of California Press.